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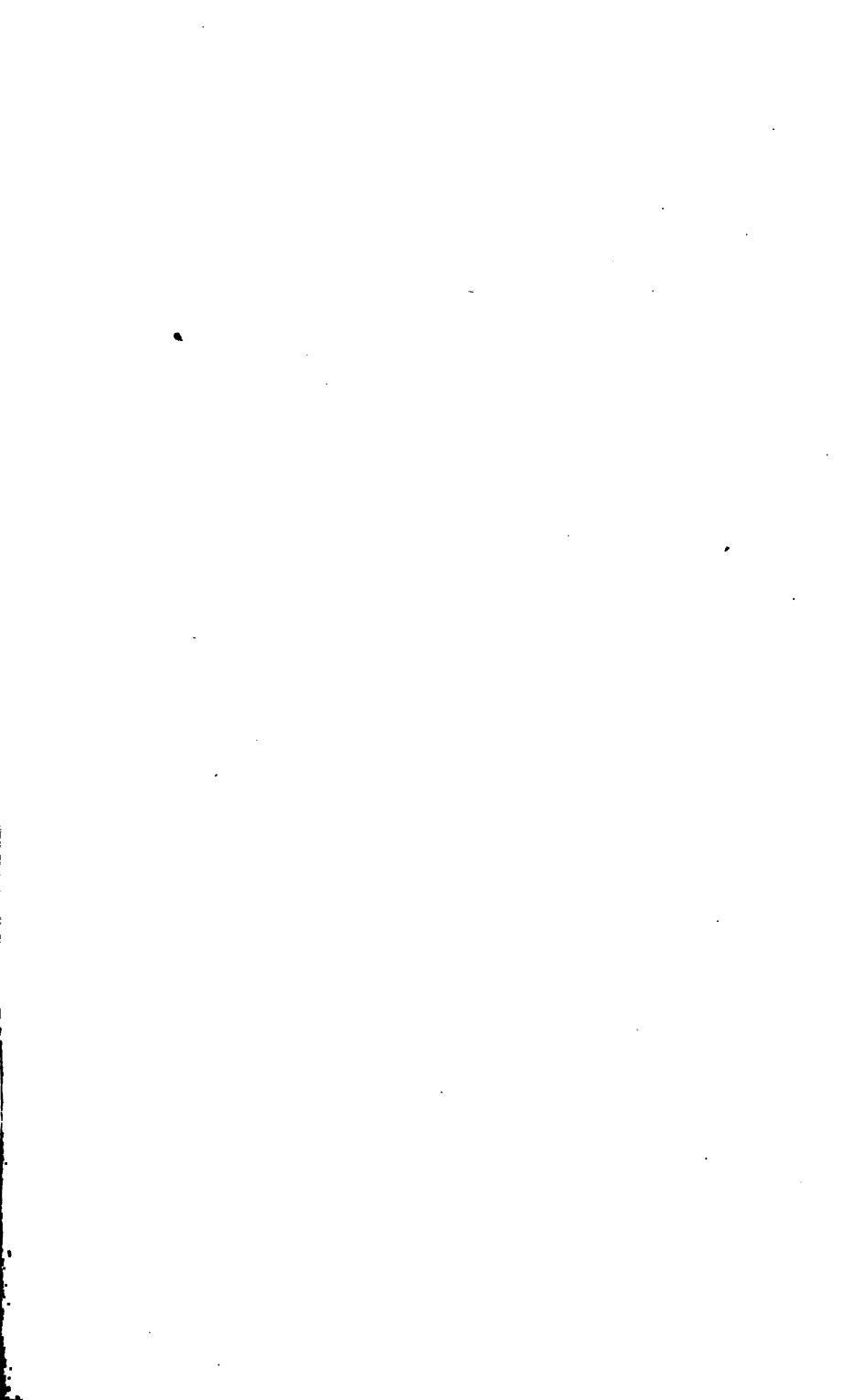
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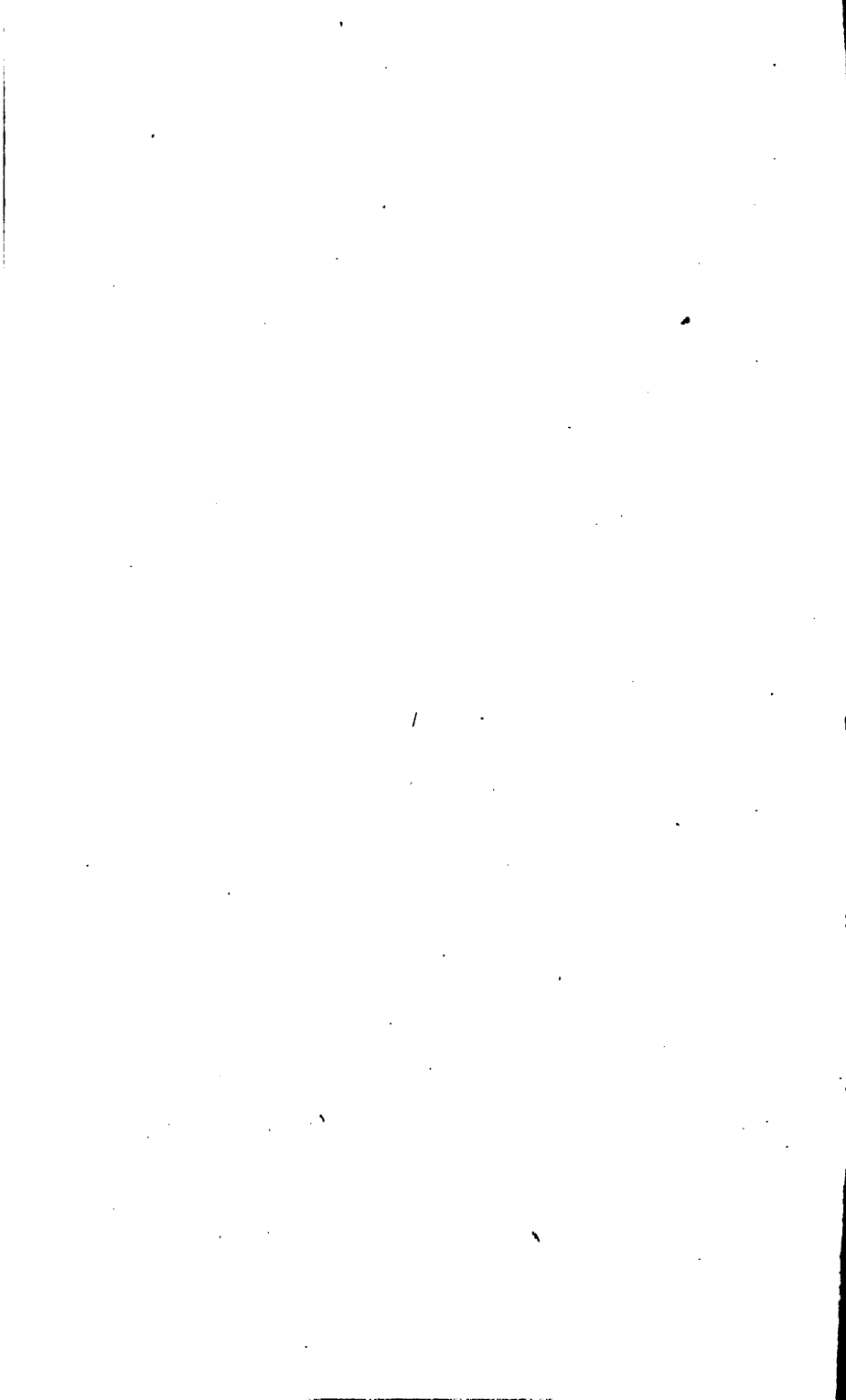
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TO COMMEND TRUTH TO THE CONSCIENCE THE OBJECT OF A  
FAITHFUL MINISTER.



A

# **Sermon,**

DELIVERED MARCH 9th, 1825,

AT THE INSTALLATION OF THE

**REV. LEONARD BACON,**

*AS PASTOR OF THE FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH AND  
SOCIETY IN NEW-HAVEN.*

---

BY JOEL HAWES,  
PASTOR OF THE FIRST CHURCH IN HARTFORD.

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It may be proper to state that this Sermon was preached May 11th, 1825, at the Installation of the Rev. Hart Talcott, as colleague pastor of the Congregational Church and Society in Warren; and also June 15th, 1825, at the Installation of the Rev. William Mitchell, as pastor of the Congregational Church and Society in Newtown.

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## SERMON.

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2 COR. iv. 2.

*By manifestation of the truth, commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.*

GOD, who is the Author of divine truth, and also of the human mind, has doubtless established a correspondence between them. In other words, he has so constituted the mind of man, that truth, clearly presented, is *seen* and *felt* to be truth. The correctness of this remark will at once be perceived, if we consider that God has revealed his truth for the express purpose of instructing men respecting their duty and hope;—that a knowledge of it lies at the foundation of all true religion and happiness;—that it is, indeed, the grand instrument by which he administers his moral government over the world, and by which he sanctifies and prepares his people for his heavenly presence.

That truth, so important to all, and revealed for such high and holy purposes, should commend itself to the minds of all,—especially to the *conscience*, that faculty in man, by which he judges of right and wrong, of duty and obligation, is what might be expected from the known constitution of the mind, and the revealed adaptation of truth to its faculties and its future destination.

Accordingly it appears from our text that Paul and his fellow Apostles did so preach the Gospel as to commend themselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. The inference is plain. The truth, which they exhibited, was *seen* and *felt* by their hearers to be truth. Otherwise it could not have extorted from them a commendation of the Apostles as honest and upright men, who lived and acted as in the sight of God.

But not to pursue this train of thought further, let us consider the example of the Apostles, exhibited in the text, as claiming

the imitation of all who are invested with the sacred office. In this view, the text calls our attention to this general sentiment,—

It should be the great aim of ministers, in preaching the Gospel, to commend the truth to the consciences of their hearers.

How they must preach in order to do this, and why they should always aim to do this, are the two points we propose to discuss in the illustration of our general doctrine.

I. In the first place then ; in order to commend the truth to the conscience, ministers must *declare all the counsel of God*. The religion of the Bible contains a system of truths,—a body of coherent doctrines and duties, closely connected and in perfect harmony. This system too is of a very wide extent,—including all that we are to believe respecting God, and all the duty which God requires of us as the fallen and accountable subjects of his government ; and in order to be understood, it must be brought forward and illustrated in all its parts and perfection. In this system there is nothing useless,—nothing which ought not to occupy the same place in the instructions of the pulpit which it is made to occupy in the pages of the Bible. If the preacher conceals, or keeps back, part of the counsel of God ; if he selects a few favourite topics and insists continually on these, while he neglects others of equal, or perhaps, greater importance, he not only fails to give that rich and interesting variety to his discourses which they ought to have, but destroys the symmetry and proportion of the Christian system, and does not present a just view even of those truths which constitute the burden of his preaching. For no doctrine of the Bible can be rightly understood, when considered by itself, or as disconnected from other doctrines to which it stands related. The first thing then at which a minister must aim, in order to commend divine truth to the conscience, is to declare all the counsel of God without exception or reserve.

2. For the same purpose he must declare it in its *proper connexion*, and follow it out in all its interesting consequences. The doctrines of the Gospel are connected with one another as forming a system of truth ; and also with certain practical results



which they are fitted and designed to produce. And we hesitate not to say, that no man can exhibit Christianity intelligibly who does not understand this connexion and keep it distinctly in view in all his instructions. If he fails here, obscurity is thrown over all his preaching, and he is constantly exposed to contradict at one time what he has said at another. In the science of theology, as in every other science, there are first principles on which others depend, and a knowledge of which in their proper connexion and relations, is indispensably necessary to a knowledge of the science. Viewed simply as abstract propositions, the doctrines of the Bible have neither beauty, nor excellence, nor power. Their true nature and tendency can be seen and felt only when contemplated as practical principles, revealed for the great purpose of recovering man from the ruins of the fall, and restoring to him the lost image of God. To make men virtuous and good, to prepare them to serve God here, and to enjoy him hereafter, is the very soul and spirit of divine truth; and where this is not kept distinctly in view, the whole system becomes unmeaning and powerless. It is in this practical connexion that the doctrines of the Bible are always exhibited by the sacred writers. They never bring them forward in an abstract, metaphysical manner, but uniformly for some directly holy purpose. They are stated, not as detached propositions, or as points of curious speculation, but as the springs of a holy life,—‘as indications’ of the character of God, and as the exciting motives of a corresponding character in man.’ Forming thus the connecting link between the character of the Creator and the creature, and aiming at nothing short of assimilating man to his Maker, they possess a majesty which it is impossible to despise, and exhibit a form of consistency and truth which it is very difficult to disbelieve.\*

These doctrines too, are inseparably connected with man’s eternal destiny. Their influence is not confined to this life. It extends into the unseen world, and will be felt by every living man during the interminable ages of his future being. This connexion of divine truth with the immortal interests of men consti-

\* Erskine’s *Internal Evidence*—a precious little volume.

tutes its chief power over the heart and conscience ; and the preacher, who would commend himself to his hearers, must hold it up in all its clearness, and follow it out in all its eternal consequences. He must unequivocally declare the promises and threatenings, the rewards and punishments, the joys and the woes that respectively await the righteous and the wicked in the future world. He must show the saint the end of his course, and point him to the crown of glory that fadeth not away ; and he must shew the sinner the end of his course, pointing him to the worm that dieth not and the fire that is not quenched. Viewed in this near and inseparable connexion with the decisions of the judgment day, divine truth appears unspeakably interesting, and comes home to the mind with all the weight and solemnity of eternity.

3. If a minister would commend the truth to the conscience, *the descriptive part of his preaching must be true to nature.* Much of a preacher's work consists in describing character and applying truth to the various circumstances of his hearers. And his descriptions, whether of saints or sinners, in order to carry conviction with them, must be so characteristic and discriminating, so exact and true, that every hearer may see his likeness and know to which class he belongs.

In no point perhaps, are sermons more frequently defective than in this. We hear a great deal of preaching which entirely fails of effect, because it is not exact in its delineations of character, nor discriminating in its application of truth. It describes depravity ; but it is not human depravity. It describes conviction of sin ; but it is such conviction as no sinner has ever felt. It describes Christian experience ; but it is such experience as no christian feels to be his own. It describes Christian enjoyment ; but it is the enjoyment of pure spirits in heaven, rather than of imperfect saints on earth. It describes the vanity of the world and the present misery of a sinful life ; but the description is overcoloured,—exaggerated, having more of fiction than truth in it ; more of romance than reality. Such preaching may have many attractive qualities ; it may be elegant and popular ; it

may amuse the fancy and gratify the taste of a worldly mind ; but it fails altogether of the great end of preaching. It never recommends truth to the conscience ; for it never aims to do this. Vague, declamatory, indiscriminate, pointless, it robs divine truth of all its power to awaken and impress, and leaves the hearers utterly ignorant of themselves and their future destiny.

Sinners are never convicted, but when the preacher describes their *real character*, and applies to them the truth that is adapted to their particular state. When this is done, they can rarely avoid being pricked in their hearts. The description presented is a description of facts ; of facts that correspond with their own experience, and which therefore cannot fail to fasten conviction on the conscience. What was it that gave to the preaching of Christ and his Apostles its peculiar power and pungency ? Was it not its clear and searching discrimination of character,—its skilful and pointed adaptation of truth to the case of every hearer ? They never drew a bow at venture ; but always aimed the arrows of truth at the heart and conscience, and aimed them with such exactness that they always reached the mark. Under their preaching the eyes of every hearer were turned upon himself ; and each saw his own feelings and character so faithfully delineated, that conscience could not resist conviction, however the heart might withhold obedience. I must add,

4. That in order to commend the truth to the conscience, *a preacher's feelings, style and manner must correspond with the message he is commissioned to deliver.* This is hardly less necessary to the proper effect of truth, than a faithful exhibition of it. If a preacher shows a want of seriousness and sincerity in his work—speaking on the great doctrines of salvation in a light unfeeling manner, or what is worse, in a spirit of censoriousness and dogmatism ; if his style and general appearance are such as to give an impression that he is more anxious to show himself than his Master, to excite admiration by his brilliant images and well-turned periods, than to lodge the word of God in the mind and win souls to Christ ; then, whatever truth his sermons may contain, they are not likely to produce any good effect. They

draw the attention of the hearer from the truth to the embellishments that are thrown around it ; from the matter to the mere manner of saying it. They put the preacher in the place of his subject ; and serve only to evaporate weighty truths, and to take from them all their power to awaken and convince.

He who would commend the truth to the conscience of others, must have a deep impression of it on his own mind. He must show that he feels, in his inmost soul, the weight of his subject, and that he desires nothing so much as to make his hearers feel it. He must deliver his message with an air of unaffected sincerity and tenderness ;—must show that he forgets himself in his concern for the honour of Christ and the salvation of souls ; and and whilst with unsparing fidelity he denounces the awful threatenings of God against sin, it must appear that he loves the sinner and deeply feels for the guilt and wretchedness of his condition.

Sincerity, seriousness, affection, earnestness, are universally and justly demanded of him who speaks to dying men, in the name of God, the words of eternal life or eternal death. How much these qualities in a preacher tend to soften the heart and impress truth on the mind, we must all have noticed. When happily combined in the character of a minister, they give him a direct and easy access to the bosoms of his hearers, and enable him to speak to the conscience, with a power of conviction, far beyond what the most laboured demonstrations, or the most finished exhibitions of a mere artificial eloquence ever possess without them. Let this suffice to show how ministers must preach in order to commend the truth to the consciences of his hearers.

We will now consider, as proposed,

## II. Why they ought to speak in this manner.

1. The first reason that occurs is, that such preaching *is best adapted to unveil, before the eyes of men, the glory of God.* The revealed glory of God is embodied in the doctrines of his word. All that we truly know of the attributes of Jehovah, of his holiness, his justice, his mercy, his truth, his grace and purposes, is taught us in the volume of inspiration. The inference is plain. The more clearly the truths of the Bible are exhibited, the more

fully the divine glory will be illustrated. How weak then, and how absurd is the objection which is sometimes made against a full and undisguised exhibition, from the pulpit, of the doctrines of the Bible. Can man behold too much of the divine glory,—or be made too fully acquainted with the character and ways of Jehovah? God has committed to his ministers a message which is designed to illustrate all the glories of his nature, so far as they are to be made known to us in the present world, and he requires them to deliver that message without alteration or disguise,—without adding to it, or taking from it. Can they then answer it to God, or to their people, or to their own consciences, if they knowingly keep back, or conceal, or pervert the doctrines of that sacred word, which is the appointed medium of manifesting to this lost world, the glory of the eternal Jehovah? But,

2. The manifestation of the truth to the consciences of men, *enables both saints and sinners to know their character and their prospects.* This, it will not be denied, is one great design of the Christian ministry. Indeed, preaching can do no good any further than it lays open the hearts of men, and makes them acquainted with their true character and condition. But what sort of preaching is best adapted to make this disclosure of character? Not that which perverts the truth of God, or renders it powerless, by wrapping it up in fine soft words;—not that which substitutes flowers of rhetoric for the substantial bread of life,—which merges in neglect, the great doctrines of the Bible as matters of doubtful or useless speculation, and insists only on the topics of a frigid morality;—not that which rests in a vague generality of representation, which addresses an audience as if they were all saints, making no discrimination between the righteous and the wicked, and sending away thoughtless hearers pleased with the preacher, and satisfied with their own character and prospects. Such preaching is most deadly in its influence. It leaves men as ignorant of God and themselves as it found them, and serves only to quiet their fears, and confirm their delusions, as they pass on to a miserable eternity.

No, my friends, the preaching that makes men know themselves, is that which declares plainly the whole counsel of God ;—which illustrates and applies the great truths of the Bible in all their relations and consequences ;—which separates the precious from the vile, and describes both the saint and the sinner so clearly, that each may see his true character. Preaching that does this, like the voice of God to Adam, *where art thou ?* arrests attention, turns the thoughts of the sinner on himself, insulates him, sets him alone before God, and makes him anticipate at the tribunal of his own conscience, the sentence that is to be passed upon him at the bar of judgment.

Divine truth is an infallible test of character. Like a faithful mirror, it reflects the true image of the soul, and enables ~~all~~ all, to whom it is clearly presented, to know where they are to class themselves. Hence it is said, the word of God is quick and powerful, sharper than a two-edged sword ;—and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. This account of the living energy of God's word accords well with what we know of its effects. Nothing will search and try and bring out the hearts of men, like a faithful exhibition of the doctrines of the Bible.

Let the truth respecting God and Christ ; respecting sin and holiness ; respecting heaven and hell, be clearly explained and closely applied to the conscience, and no hearer can remain indifferent or unconcerned. Like the pillar of the cloud that guided the children of Israel to the land of promise, it presents an aspect of brightness to the friends of God, but an aspect of darkness to his enemies. It guides, protects, and comforts the penitent and the pious : but it disturbs, annoys and distresses the impenitent and the unholy.

If you would inspire the christian with the assurance of hope, and build him up in the faith and comforts of the Gospel ; apply the truth to his heart, and bring it to shine upon his mind in all its brightness and glory. If you would unmask self-deceivers, and show the hypocrite the unsoundness of his hope ; bring his character to the touchstone of truth, and try him by the doctrines

of the Bible. Or if you would sweep away from the wicked their refuges of lies, and show them the guilt and the dreariness of their condition; unveil to their view the character of God, and pour upon their minds the clear and discriminating light of his word.

It was in this way that our Saviour detected the hearts of men, and constrained them always to take sides either for or against Him. He rarely preached a sermon which did not carry conviction to the conscience, and discover to his hearers their true character. When the young man came to him with the request,—good master, what good thing shall I do that I may inherit eternal life; by a pointed application of truth to his conscience, he destroyed his false hopes and sent him away sorrowful. When he preached the doctrine of God's discriminating sovereignty in the bestowment of his blessings, in the synagogue of Nazareth; his hearers were cut to the heart, and at once showed their hostility to truth and holiness, by attempting to take his life. In like manner, when he spoke to the disconsolate disciples, on their way to Emmaus, the things respecting himself; he kindled in their bosoms a glow of holy love, and made them feel that they were indeed his friends and the friends of God. And such will always be the effect of a clear manifestation of the great doctrines of the Bible. Indeed, just so far as divine truth is made to bear on the conscience, whether of saints or sinners, it divides the one from the other and makes them anticipate the decisions of that day, when the righteous shall lift up their heads with joy, their redemption having come, and the wicked shall wail and gnash their teeth, sinking amid the woes of a ruined eternity.

3. Ministers ought so to preach as to commend the truth to the conscience, because in so doing *they bring to bear on the mind that moral influence, which God makes effectual to salvation.* It should never be forgotten, that the success of preaching depends absolutely on the blessing of God. Paul may plant, and Apollos water, but it is God which giveth the increase. But while this truth should ever be kept in mind, and excite ministers to pray without ceasing, for the influences of the Spirit to attend

their labours, there is another truth, not less important to be remembered, namely,—*the word of God is the sword of the Spirit,—the great and indispensable instrument of salvation.* Is not my word like as a fire, saith the Lord, and as a hammer, that breaketh the rock in pieces. I am not ashamed of the Gospel, says the Apostle Paul, for it is the *power* of God unto salvation. Of his own will, says, St. James, begat he us by the word of truth. Being born again, says St. Peter, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God which liveth and abideth forever.

In beginning and carrying on the work of grace in the heart, the Holy Spirit always operates by the truth. And may it not be added, that the influences of the Spirit are usually granted in proportion to the plainness and fidelity with which truth is presented and urged home upon the conscience. We would not limit the sovereignty of God, in dispensing the blessings of his grace; but we must protest, and strongly protest, against that view of his sovereignty, which sets aside the necessity of appropriate means, or makes it an occasion of sloth and carelessness in men,—an error, we think, into which ministers and christians have not unfrequently fallen.

The truth of God is the appointed instrument of salvation. It is an appropriate and powerful instrument, wisely adapted to the nature of man as a moral agent; and when made to bear on the conscience in its own proper energy, we may expect that the promised influences of the Spirit will make it effectual. What is the testimony of facts on this subject? Where the doctrines of the Bible are unknown, there all is dreary and silent as the grave. Where these doctrines are denied or concealed, no rain or dew of heaven descends to water the parched ground. Where they are mixed with error,—feebly and obscurely exhibited, there their efficacy is diminished in the same proportion. But where they are preached with clearness, with discrimination and power, there the life-giving influences of the spirit are granted; there the glory and excellence of truth are seen in sinners renewed, and



saints advancing to join the spirits of the just made perfect in heaven.

4. By commending the truth to the consciences of their hearers, *ministers will be prepared to give up their account with joy and not with grief.* We might say indeed that the minister, who steadily aims to commend the truth to the conscience, enjoys a present peace and satisfaction of which the unfaithful steward of the mysteries of God knows nothing. Having taken the word of God as his guide, and the glory of God as his end, he pursues a straight forward course, strong in the strength of the Lord and happy in the conscious enjoyment of his approving presence. Amidst all the labours and trials of the ministry, he has this rejoicing, the testimony of his conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, he has had his conversation in the world. He has renounced the hidden things of dishonesty; he walks not in craftiness, nor handles the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth, commending himself to every man's conscience in the sight of God, he can say with the Apostle in review of his ministry, *I am pure from the blood of all men.* And when he comes to the close of life, he can leave the world in the noble, in the only worthy triumph of a dying minister—I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day.

These hopes, so inspiriting amidst his labours and trials, and so cheering to his soul, as he takes leave of the world to pass into the valley of death, will all be realized, and infinitely more than realized in that glorious morning that shall call him and his people from the slumbers of the grave. As he rises with them to meet the descending Judge, with what joy unspeakable and full of glory, will he present the ransomed of his flock to the great Shepherd of the sheep saying,—Behold me and the children thou hast given me. Both are welcomed home as the heirs of glory and enter into the joy of their Lord—he as a faithful steward of the mysteries of God, and they as the happy fruits of his labours

and prayers. He is their rejoicing, and they are his rejoicing in the day of the Lord Jesus.

I cannot close without suggesting a few reflections adapted to the present occasion, and

1. We may learn from our subject, *what is the most practical kind of preaching*. That is doubtless the most practical preaching which most deeply impresses the heart, and prompts to the most careful performance of Christian duties. Now what kind of preaching is best adapted to produce this effect? Is it not that which declares the whole counsel of God,—which explains, and proves, and presses home the great principles of the Gospel?—which discriminates between the righteous and the wicked, and by a pointed application of truth to the heart and conscience, enables each hearer to know where he is and what he is? Every one, who has attentively read the New Testament, must have perceived that Christian doctrines are uniformly urged as the foundation and motives of Christian practice. These things, says the Apostle, alluding to some of the leading doctrines of the Gospel, these things, I will that thou affirm *constantly*, that they (or in order that they) who have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. Paul, then, regarded the doctrines of the Bible as essential to a virtuous and holy life. And so it must be from the nature of the case. What are the doctrines of the Bible, but the instructions and facts which God has revealed respecting his character and government; respecting the character and state of man, and his duty and prospects for eternity? And can there be virtue, or holiness without the knowledge and belief of these instructions and facts? Are they not the main spring of a holy life,—the great and indispensable motives to good works? Nothing can produce conviction of sin, but truth exhibited to the mind and fastened on the conscience. Nothing can produce holy affections, but the knowledge of holy objects. And nothing can promote growth in grace, or prepare men for heaven, but the truth of God, apprehended by the understanding and made efficacious by the Holy Spirit. The most practical preaching then, is that which brings into view most of God and Christ,—of heaven

and hell,—which lays open and probes most deeply the moral malady of the heart, and brings to bear on the mind the greatest power of truth and motive. And does not this accord with your own experience? When have you gone from the house of God with the deepest sense of your imperfections and sins, and with the strongest resolutions of amendment? When has the heart been most tender, and the conscience most awake,—the world seemed *least* in your estimation, and the things of God and eternity *nearest* and *most affecting* to your minds? Was it when you had been listening to preaching which insists on moral and social duties to the neglect of Christian doctrines,—which while it pleases the fancy and regales the taste by ‘prettinesses of style’ and language, comes not near the heart and conscience,—which explains nothing, proves nothing, applies nothing? Was it not rather when the preacher came near to you in the majesty and power of God’s truth,—when he unfolded the principles of the divine government, your own character, state and obligations—and urged home the great doctrines that are unto salvation? That is not the best preaching, says Bishop Burnet, which makes the hearers go away talking to one another, and praising the speaker; but that which makes them go away silent, serious, and hastening to be alone.

Let the appeal be made to facts, and we doubt not that throughout this land, and throughout the Christian world, it will be found that the most instructive preaching is at the same time the most practical preaching,—that pure morals, elevated Christian sentiment and practice, are most prevalent where the truths of God’s word are preached with the greatest plainness, discrimination and fidelity. Indeed it is not too much to say, that if these truths are kept out of view, a minister may preach all his life long, on the duties of morality, without any other effect than to lead his people away from the Saviour, and to carry them dead in trespasses and sins down to perdition.

The testimony of Bishop Lavington on this point is worthy of special notice. In a charge to his clergy, he says—“My brethren, I beg of you to rise up with me against moral preaching.

We have long been attempting the reformation of the nation by discourses of this kind. With what effect? None at all. On the contrary, we have dexterously preached the people into downright infidelity. We must change our voice. We must preach Christ and him crucified. Nothing but the Gospel is, nothing but the Gospel will be found to be, the power of God unto salvation."

The testimony of Dr. Chalmers is equally explicit and striking. After a twelve years experiment in "expatiating on the meanness of dishonesty, on the villany of falsehood and the various grosser deformities of character," and in pressing upon his people the "reformation of honour, and truth, and integrity," he has given this as the result,—that he never heard of any such reformations having been effected among them. "I am not sensible," he says, "that all the vehemence with which I urged the virtues and proprieties of social life, had the weight of a feather on the moral habits of my parishioners. And it was not," he adds, "till I got thoroughly impressed by the *utter alienation of the heart and all its affections and desires from God*; it was not till reconciliation to him became the distinct and prominent object of my ministerial exertions; it was not till I took the scriptural way of laying the method of reconciliation before them; it was not, in one word, till the contemplations of my people were turned to the great and essential elements in the business of a soul turning unto God and providing for its eternity, that I ever heard of any of those subordinate reformations which I aforetime made the earnest and the zealous, but I am afraid, at the same time the ultimate object of my earlier ministrations."

2. The manifestation of the truth is the *best way in which a minister can secure the affectionate confidence and respect of his people*. We do not forget, in this remark, the natural opposition of the heart to God. We are aware of it in all its extent, nor do we believe it to be in the power of man or angel so to present the doctrines of the Bible as to render them agreeable to the heart while it retains its enmity to the God of the Bible. Christ

and his Apostles never attempted to do this ; nor will any minister attempt to do this, who is faithful to his Master and the souls committed to his care. But man is not all heart. He has reason and conscience ; and these faculties, whatever be the state of the heart, are always on the side of God and a faithful dispensation of his truth. When a minister shows himself sincere and honest in his work ; when he appears to love his people and feel his responsibility to God, and under the influence of these feelings, boldly and faithfully delivers his message, he approves himself to every man's conscience, and rarely fails to secure the respect even of those who smart under his searching applications of truth, and tremble at the threatenings he denounces against their sins. They know what belongs to the office and character of an ambassador of God ; and though, perhaps, by a concealment or partial exhibition of truth, he may conciliate their prevailing taste and present wishes, he forfeits their confidence and sinks in their estimation. They suspect his sincerity ; they condemn his motives ; and soon come to regard him, not as one supremely bent on their salvation, but as a time-server, unfaithful to God, and interested only for himself. He comes before his people, not as a messenger from the Lord of hosts, speaking to them in the name and by the authority of the great God, but as a mere secular declaimer, speaking to them in his own name and by his own authority.

His discourses, not being inspirited by truth, nor bearing the sanction of a thus saith the Lord, take no deep hold on the soul ; they do not reach the conscience ; they do not rouse the affections ; they do not produce that thorough conviction of the truth and importance of religion, without which no people can feel much interest in their pastor, or much respect for his character.

The ministry to be respected must wear the robes of truth and stand forth in its own appropriate energies, as an institution of God, designed to enlighten and save a ruined world. The servant of Christ, whose steady aim is to commend himself to the conscience,—who is plain, affectionate, faithful in declaring the

counsel of God, stands before his people an acknowledged ambassador from the King of kings. He speaks with all the authority of God, and all the power of conscience on his side. The instruments with which he is furnished to operate on the mind, to move the affections, and mould the soul for heaven, are the 'infinite realities of the spiritual world, the sanctions of eternity,' the 'powers of the life to come;' and whilst in the strength of omnipotence, he boldly grasps these weapons of his warfare, and skilfully wields them, looking to God for his blessing, he has a weight and an influence which must be felt and must be respected. Such a preacher, in comparison of those who conceal or fritter away the truth of God, "resembles the angel of the Apocalypse who was seen standing in the sun." His addresses from the pulpit, derived from the eternal source of light and power, fall upon the conscience with peculiar weight and solemnity. He is felt to be a man of God in the pulpit and out of it; he is felt to be such in the social circle, in the sick room, in the house of mourning and in all the intercourse of life; and appearing thus in the undoubted, self-commending credentials of a messenger from the Lord of hosts, he will gather around him a people who are in earnest about their eternity, and will look up to him as a safe and trusty guide in the great concerns of salvation.

4. The office of a minister is *one of great difficulty and great responsibility*. We speak not here of the many and great labours that come upon him in his character as a pastor; of his weariness and painfulness in watching over the flock of God, in instructing the young, in visiting from house to house, in attending upon the sick and dying, in comforting the afflicted, in guiding the inquiring, in cheering the desponding, in quickening, encouraging and guiding all in the way to heaven by his own holy life and conversation. We speak simply of his work as a preacher; and we say that the difficulty and responsibility connected with this work are such as might well make even an apostle exclaim—who is sufficient for these things! To discuss a point in theology in the way of argument, to compose a moral essay, or to

throw out a few superficial, disconnected thoughts in the form of a sermon, and call this preaching, is indeed no difficult matter. But rightly to divide the word of life, giving to each his portion in due season ; to exhibit and apply the truth of God in its proper connexions and consequences,—holding it forth with such discrimination and clearness as to “ send irresistible light into the conscience, and keep it there ;” to describe saints and sinners, so that each may ‘ feel the hand of the preacher searching the conscience and laying open the secrets of the heart ;’ in short, to compose sermons that are at once *warm* and *weighty* ; in which argument and feeling, truth and pathos are so united as to make all solid, useful, penetrating and impressive ; and then to deliver these discourses with that seriousness, affection and earnestness, which best become the messages of God ; to be able to do all this,—and what is more, to be able to do it year after year, in the same congregation—what rare qualifications are necessary ! What profound knowledge of the Scriptures ; what deep acquaintance with one’s own heart ; what keen discernment of character ; what skill in adapting truth to each one’s particular case ; what patience of labour and study ; what boldness and fidelity ; what piety and zeal, and prayerfulness, are demanded of him who would show himself a workman that needeth not to be ashamed ! And then, think of his responsibility. The honour of the Redeemer and the glory of his Gospel are entrusted to him ; he is the representative of the Divine Majesty among his people ; they will think of God very much as he represents him ; he is appointed to watch for souls,—for souls purchased by the blood of Christ, and which are to exist for ever in bliss or wo indescribable. And for all he must give account unto him who is to judge the quick and the dead. Who in view of such a charge can help exclaiming with the Apostle, who is sufficient for these things?—Justly did the pious Leighton observe, that even the best would have reason to fail and give over in this work, were not our Lord the chief Shepherd ;—were not all our sufficiency laid up in his fulness, and all our insufficiency covered in his gracious acceptance.

Let these thoughts, my beloved brother, sink down into your heart and abide there as principles of action. We know well the anxieties which press upon your spirits at this solemn hour ; for we have felt them all, and can now tell you, after seven years experience, that there is just cause for them all. Nor would we say a word to increase the burden of this ~~work~~<sup>hour</sup>, but only to lead you to renounce all self-confidence, and to put your trust in him who alone can gird you for the conflict and give you the victory. We doubt not that in prospect of entering the sacred office, you have often endeavoured to count the cost. But the cares and anxieties, the life-wasting labours of that office, my brother, can be known only from experience. It is well that you do not know them. We trust that he who has said, Lo I am with you always, will strengthen you to endure them, and prepare you by the trials that await you, to sympathize with a suffering world, and to impart to others the comfort wherewith you yourself shall be comforted of God. Trials are a necessary part of a minister's education ; and if he who has called you to the ministry designs to make you eminently useful, rely upon it that you are not to be exempted from the common lot. But let not your heart be troubled. You are called to "take a part with God in God's noblest work,"—a work far more honourable than to legislate for nations, to command armies, or to sit upon the throne of empire ; and if you engage in it with purity of motives and simplicity of purpose, resolved to spend and be spent in the service of God and your fellow-men, he will sustain you under every burden, and make your severest toils the source of your sweetest enjoyments.

God has cast your lot in a most interesting station ; and while it is pre-eminently important that the Gospel should be preached *here in all its simplicity and plainness*, you will remember, my dear brother, that it is only by making it your constant aim thus to preach the Gospel that you can expect to secure the respectful confidence of this beloved people, or sustain among them the character of an able and faithful minister. The interest that is excited by mere manner, by voice, or gesture, or language, will



soon pass away ; but the truth of God is always interesting,—and the more clearly it is presented, the more interesting. Preach that truth, my brother, preach it boldly and faithfully, and you will not fail to arrest attention ; to penetrate the conscience and impress the hearts of your hearers. What God said to the prophet Ezekiel, he is now saying to you—Go and speak unto this people, and tell them thus saith the Lord, whether they will hear or whether they will forbear. Hold up the mirror of truth to their view so that each may see the image of his own soul and his prospects for eternity. Remember that God holds you accountable to him for these souls that are about to be committed to your care. See to it that none of them perish through your neglect to teach them the way of truth and holiness. Lodge in their consciences lasting evidence that having declared to them the whole counsel of God, you are pure from their blood. Then may you, on your dying bed, review your ministry with satisfaction, and look forward with the joyful hope of an eternal reward in heaven. Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life, is the cheering voice of him who this day calls you into the ministry and bids you take the oversight of this flock. *Be thou faithful unto death*, and you may hope that these souls redeemed by the blood of Christ and sanctified by his spirit, will be your joy and crown of rejoicing forever in the kingdom of your and their Father.

5. One word more and I have done. *Hearers while sitting under the manifestation of the truth, are in a situation deeply interesting and solemn.* The character of God is then brought near to them, and his claims are fixed on the conscience. The principles of his law and government are unfolded ; the gracious offers of his Gospel and the awful sanctions of eternity are pressed upon the attention ; and a test of character furnished, by which every one may know whether he is a saint or a sinner, a friend or an enemy of God. In these circumstances neutrality is impossible. While truth is shining into the mind and pressing upon conscience the obligations of duty, every hearer stands, as

it were, in the presence of God and is obliged to take sides ;— either to receive or reject the tender of life,—either to love or hate the light, and thus is formed into a vessel of mercy or a vessel of wrath. “The sword of the spirit is an awful weapon ; where it fails to inflict a salutary wound, it always exerts its destructive edge.”

Such, brethren and friends of this congregation, is the nature and tendency of the message which our young brother is commissioned to bear to you from the Lord of hosts. It is to all, to whom it is faithfully delivered, a savour of life unto life, or of death unto death. Oh ! how solemn then are the transactions of this day ! They stand connected with consequences lasting as eternity, and as deeply interesting as the everlasting life or death of the soul. Do thoughts like these throw a damp over your spirits and make you tremble at what is now passing in this house ? Attempt not to remove the impression. The reality infinitely surpasses the liveliest conceptions you can form of the solemnity of a scene like this.

We trust you will never tempt our young brother, by an unwillingness on your part to hear the truth, to withhold the doctrines of the Gospel, or to deal deceitfully with your souls. The word which he is commissioned to preach among you is the power of God unto salvation. There is no spiritual life without it. Let him then be encouraged to preach that word in all its excellence and glory ; in all its humbling and elevating principles ; in all its cheering promises and awful threatenings ; in all its present obligations and eternal consequences. And whilst he faithfully declares the counsel of God, let your prayers ascend to the throne of all-sufficient grace that the truth may be set home and made effectual in building you up in the faith and hopes of the Gospel. Ever remember, beloved friends, that the day of account is at hand. Think of it whenever you enter this sanctuary to hear the word of God ; think of it when you retire, and let the practical influence of it be felt in all the intercourse and concerns of life.

This, our dear brother, is called to speak to you a little while as a dying man to dying men ; and then must meet you with your former pastors, who have broken unto you the bread of life, at the bar of Christ. There in the light of eternity, the truth of God's word will be illustrated with such clearness and applied with such power as will force conviction and overwhelm every mind. There they will be proclaimed, not by mortal tongue, but by the Judge himself from the throne of final decision ; and their eternal importance will be confirmed in the sentence that shall raise the friends of God to mansions in the skies, and sink his enemies amidst the woes of a miserable eternity. For that great day of his coming, the Lord in mercy prepare both minister and people. Amen.

## **HYMN**

**FOR THE OCCASION,**

**BY THE PASTOR ELECT.**

- 1 **HERE, Lord of life and light, to thee  
Our pilgrim fathers bowed the knee ;  
Thou heard'st their prayer—and on this place  
They reared the temple of thy grace.**
- 2 **They thought on England's fields of green,  
Nor wept that ocean rolled between ;  
But praised the Lord—the Lord their guide,  
Who led them o'er the swelling tide.**
- 3 **They gazed on yonder mountains rude,  
And, in this wide wild solitude,  
They worshipped thee, O God, whose hand  
Had brought them to their promised land.**
- 4 **Here thine own servants preached thy word,  
Safe from the terrors of the sword ;  
Nor preached in vain :—each rolling year  
Gave token that the Lord was here.**
- 5 **Here still thy word is preached ; and still,  
As once on Zion's sacred hill,  
Thy grace descends like timely showers,  
For still our fathers' God is ours.**
- 6 **And o'er our fathers' graves to-day,  
To thee our fathers' God we pray—  
Here on thy church, till time shall end,  
Let showers of heavenly grace descend.**

